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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES, INCLUDING PALESTINE

Written statement* submitted by North-South XXI, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[20 December 1999]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, as received from the submitting non-governmental organization.

ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, THE RELEASE OF PRISONERS AND THE RIGHT TO RETURN

1. For half-a-century, the Israeli State, with the support of the United States, has been able to ignore United Nations resolutions, openly violate international law and impose its wishes on the Palestinian people and neighbouring Arab peoples.

2. Since 1993, talks between the Israelis and the Palestinians have been deadlocked, and effective recognition of the rights of the Palestinian people has not been forthcoming. The Palestinian Authority has merely illusory power. Israeli settlements have been built up, Palestinian "refugees" in exile have not been able to return to their lands and the Palestinian militants in prison are still locked up. In defiance of Security Council resolution 242, Jerusalem is still occupied by force. The Palestinian people, under foreign occupation since 1949, has never benefited from the "humanitarian intervention" so loudly proclaimed when it suits the great Powers' strategy.

3. The compromises forced on the Palestinian people have negated all the work of the United Nations on behalf of Palestine and rendered meaningless the basic principles of international law: the equal sovereignty of States, the right to self-determination, human rights, etc. Because of the deteriorating situation, everything possible is done to make Palestine a "sub-State" permanently policed by Israel, with the assistance of the United States.

4. The Palestinians in Israel themselves have to endure discriminatory measures and the Israeli authorities exploit and deepen their divisions (the tribal structures of rural Muslim and Christian communities) and set "minorities" (particularly the Druze) against each other. The proletarianization of the Arab population of Israel gives rise to a sort of "internal immigration" that the privileged Jewish classes can take advantage of. This exploitation comes on top of that of Palestinian workers in underpaid jobs with Israeli firms in the occupied territories.

5. The endless impunity enjoyed by the State of Israel must be condemned. Otherwise, condemnations for violations of human rights and the rights of peoples in other parts of the world become totally meaningless and only serve as examples of the practice of double standards.

6. The Commission on Human rights should invite all special rapporteurs and thematic mechanisms, within their respective mandates, to focus on the negative effects and consequences of the unilateral coercive measures used against the Palestinian people.